

CD 2012--68



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

2012-13
season

University of Toronto Wind Ensemble

Gillian MacKay, conductor

Friday, October 12, 2012
7:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre
Edward Johnson Building

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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO WIND ENSEMBLE

Gillian MacKay, conductor

Smetana Fanfare

Karel Husa

(b. 19

First Suite in E-flat

Gustav Holst

(1874-1934)

I. Chaconne

II. Intermezzo

III. March

Little Threepenny Music

Kurt Weill

(1900-1950)

I. Overture

II. The Moritat of Mack The Knife

III. The Instead-of Song

IV. The Ballad Of The Easy Life

V. Polly's Song

VI. Cannon Song

VII. Threepenny Finale

Lisa Hartl, German narration

INTERMISSION

Falling From Cloudless Skies

Derek Charles

(b. 19

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Program Notes

KAREL HUSA (b. 1921) **Smetana Fanfare**

Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884) like other nationalist composers of his time, sought to express the character of his country, preserving their songs and dances through his music. Smetana's best known orchestral work *Ma Vlast* (My Country) is a set of six symphonic poems which describe the myths, national glories and scenery of Bohemia (Czechoslovakia). His influence on future Czech composers was profound.

Pulitzer Prize winning composer Karel Husa is perhaps best known for his programmatic work *Music for Prague 1968*, written in memory of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Although Husa became an American citizen in 1959, he retained a deep love of his homeland, saying "the longer I am far away...(I left Czechoslovakia in 1946) the more I remember the beauty of it." It is appropriate that in 1984, Husa was chosen by San Diego State University to create a composition to honor the 100th anniversary of Bedrich Smetana's death. The result of the commission was the *Smetana Fanfare*, which was premiered by the SDSU Wind Ensemble on April 3, 1984.

Smetana Fanfare uses musical excerpts from Smetana's symphonic poem *Wallenstein's Camp*, inspired by a dramatic trilogy by German poet and playwright Friedrich Schiller. In Husa's composition, these direct musical quotations can be heard in the opening trumpet calls, the cascading brass triplets that open the fanfare and an ascending brass theme heard several times near the end of the piece. Karel Husa's inclination to connect tonal to atonal music, the old to the new, is especially apt in a work that pays tribute, from Czechoslovakia's best known

contemporary composer to his musical predecessor. The note of triumph on which the fanfare ends is a fitting salute to the 'father of Czech music' from his musical heir.

GUSTAV HOLST (1874-1934) **First Suite in E-flat**

In music, a suite is a set of pieces intended to be performed together in a concert setting. Gustav Holst's *First Suite in E-flat* presents three such pieces: *Chaconne*, *Intermezzo*, and *March*. Holst was born into a musical family in Cheltenham, England and began his earliest training with his father who was a conductor, pianist and teacher. In addition to teaching young Gustav piano and violin, his father introduced him to the trombone as a (likely ineffective) treatment for asthma. As Holst's musical abilities became apparent, he was sent to the Royal College of Music in London to study composition. While there, he was influenced by the work of Richard Wagner and by fellow Englishman and composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, with whom he developed a lifelong friendship. Although the orchestral suite *The Planets* is considered by many to be his most successful work, his daughter Imogen Holst states that her father believed his finest composition was *Hammersmith: Prelude and Scherzo*, composed for wind ensemble.

The title of tonight's work is sometimes given as *First Suite in Eb for Military Band*. Holst, understanding that the instrumentation available in town or military bands varied greatly, cleverly orchestrated the piece so that it was playable by as few as nineteen musicians. The additional parts were all marked *ad lib*, or optional. Although an original manuscript exists in the British Library

dated 1909, individual parts for the musicians were not published until 1921, and a full score for the conductor did not follow until 1948. A 1984 score that clarifies issues of instrumentation, was edited by English composer Colin Matthews with the help of Holst's daughter Imogen and American conductor Frederick Fennell.

The form of the first movement is in its title: *Chaconne*, in which an 8-measure bass line and harmony are repeated. Holst's theme, first presented by the bass voices, is followed by fifteen variations. The middle movement, *Intermezzo*, reveals the theme inverted in two contrasting styles, one light and detached, the other legato. In the final movement, *March*, Holst's theme first appears in an articulated martial character, followed by a more lyrical trio version. A powerful brass statement followed by a dazzling flourish from the woodwinds brings the suite to a rousing end.

KURT WEILL (1900-1950) **Little Threepenny Music**

The time between the two World Wars was a difficult time in Germany. Humiliated by the onerous terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Germans had to endure years of financial difficulties and privations. In this setting, German dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950), collaborated to create *The Threepenny Opera*. It was not, as Brecht explained, an opera about beggars, but an opera for beggars: "Since this opera was intended to be as splendid as only beggars can imagine, and yet cheap enough for beggars to be able to watch, it is called the **THREEPENNY OPERA**." Based on *The Beggar's Opera* by 18th century poet and dramatist John Gay, the *Threepenny Opera* had its premiere in Berlin on August 31, 1928.

The "opera" tells the story of Mackie

Messer or Mack the Knife. Mack runs afoul of Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum, the boss of London's beggars, when it is discovered that he has married Peachum's daughter, Polly. Peachum contrives through various means to have Mack arrested and sentenced to hang. This includes blackmailing Tiger Brown, the police commissioner, who is reluctant to arrest Mack as they are old army comrades. Mack initially escapes from jail with the help of Tiger's daughter Lucy, to whom he is also secretly married, but is eventually re-arrested. As Mack awaits his execution, he begs everyone's forgiveness, but at the last moment is pardoned by the King, and so the story ends happily. The work is meant to be both a satire of the more outlandish conventions of serious opera and a critique of stratified society at large. Germans viewing the opera knew the extent to which such a happy ending was unlikely.

The Threepenny Opera was an immediate success and shortly after its premiere, conductor Otto Klemperer commissioned Weill to arrange a suite from the opera. This instrumentation for this suite is very nearly the same as the theatre orchestra for which the opera was composed; the dry crispness of the music is created in part by the lack of the strings one would normally find in an orchestra pit. Interspersed between movements in tonight's performance you will hear the voice of Lisa Hartl (trumpet), who will give a brief description of the action leading up to the movement about to be played.

Notes by Lisa Jack

DEREK CHARKE (b. 1974) **Falling From Cloudless Skies**

Falling from Cloudless Skies incorporates processed and synthesized sounds of ice – creaking ripping, tearing sounds to mimic

the ice – flaw leads, water and underwater sounds. Electronic and ecological sounds are paired with the ensemble, both as a instrument, and also juxtaposed, as if in competition with the acoustic instruments. The ultimate goal is to place the musicians into an environment that is not normal; an abstraction of an all familiar concept amongst scientists dealing with global warming. I'll use the example of the polar bear that must attack the walrus, a prey that is too large, because it has no alternative. I began this new work by capturing (recording) sounds in the field, including the use of hydrophones for underwater sounds. Electronic sounds, other than the environmental sounds collected at the source include cracking, breaking, rubbing, tearing, ripping and crashing kinds of sounds that were created using mostly frozen ice, cardboard, plastic, creaking doors and velcro. Chunks of ice were created in my freezer and then smashed and cracked. I edited the sounds in my home studio using a combination of Max/MSP/Jitter, Pro Tools and Digital Performer. The orchestra score was then created in tandem with the electronic materials.

"A six-pound chunk of ice fell from sky. The source of the ice wasn't immediately known. The increase of these extreme atmospheric events, incidents involving megacryometeors, balls of ice that fall out of the clear blue sky – possibly due to global warming – could be a new type of fingerprint of Climate Change."

Megacryometeors, a term coined by Dr. Jesus Martinez-Frias, is derived from "mega" which means big, "cryo" for ice and "meteor," the debris that streak through the atmosphere. A note I received via email from Dr. Martinez-Frias corrects an earlier statement which read, "the extraterrestrial debris that streak through the atmosphere." Instead he says that, "The ice is not extraterrestrial; it clearly comes (and was formed) from our

Earth's atmosphere (more specifically in the troposphere). This is unequivocally confirmed by its isotopic composition.

Technology merges with the acoustic – is it natural? The start of this work sees one minute of soundscape; crashing, cracking, ripping, tearing and broken sounds. The ice is forming in the sky. A long development ensues and a rhythmic counterpoint plays out between a darabuka and pizzicato strings. Rhythm is altered between 3/4 and 6/8: the darabuka often transitioning to cycles of 7 and 5. Woodwind instruments interject along with electronic sounds. A contrabassoon solo eventually ensues in its lowest register – out of place – our polar bear. Descending chromaticism follows, the ice is falling perhaps. Oboes enter, staccato, in major and minor seconds in the lowest register, a raw sound. Eventually the section builds until we get the first major climax of the work. Following this the lowest B-flat enters in the piano and bass instruments. Text is recited, "A six-pound chunk of ice fell from the sky. The source of the ice wasn't immediately known. The increase of these extreme atmospheric events, incidents involving megacryometeors, balls of ice that fall out of the clear blue sky – possibly due to global warming – could be a new type of fingerprint of Climate Change. A term coined from "mega," which means "big," "cryo" for "ice" and "meteor," the extraterrestrial debris that streak through the atmosphere." Eventually this leads to a third and final section. Rhythm, harmony and melody becomes more regular, alternating between 3/4 and 2/4. At points we hear the sounds of dogs, ravens. A synthesized choir accompanies near the end, as the darabuka returns with its 7 and 5 pairings until the very end.

Falling from Cloudless Skies was premiered at the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra New Music Festival, February 6, 2010. - *Note by the composer*

Biographies

GILLIAN MACKAY is an Associate Professor of Music of the University of Toronto, where she conducts the Wind Ensemble and teaches conducting and trumpet. She is also Associate Dean of Graduate Education. An award-winning teacher, Gillian has an active professional career as a trumpeter, conductor, adjudicator, and clinician. She has conducted honour bands throughout Canada and the United States, and is Associate Conductor of the Canadian Wind Orchestra. Dr. MacKay has adjudicated Canadian band festivals at local, provincial, and national levels in Canada. She has conducted honour bands and judged competitions in Singapore and Thailand.

Dr. MacKay has presented clinics and workshops at provincial and state conferences in Canada and the United States, and is known for her work on the relationship between conducting and mime. Also recognized as a conducting pedagogue, Gillian leads the University of Toronto Wind Conducting Symposium each July, and has been the guest instructor at other symposia in Canada and the United States. As a trumpeter, she has a particular interest in the French solo trumpet and cornet music of the 19th century.

Gillian holds degrees and diplomas from the University of Lethbridge, McGill University, the University of Calgary, and Northwestern University. Previously, she served as Instructor of Brass at Medicine Hat College, and Director of the School of Music at the University of Windsor.

DEREK CHARKE (b. 1974) is a composer, a flutist, and an associate professor of music at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. His music is recognized as an important

and original contribution to the Canadian music scene. Most recently, his work *Sepia Fragments* won a JUNO Award for classical composition of the year in 2012.

Derek has been commissioned by world-renowned artists as the Kronos Quartet, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Nova Scotia, the St. Lawrence String Quartet, the Katona Twins guitar duo, and Inuit throat singer Tanya Tagaq Gillis. His works have been heard in Carnegie Hall, the Guggenheim Museum, Roy Thomson Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

A Co-Director of the Annual Acadia New Music Festival *Shattering the Silence*, Derek has been a Distinguished Guest Composer at the Winnipeg New Music Festival, and a Guest Composer for the 2010 Newfoundland Music Festival.

Derek has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Nova Scotia, SOCAN Foundation, CBC Radio, Radio Canada, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, among others. As well, *What do the Birds Think?* garnered a special mention from the Kubik Prize, and his work *Xynith* won him a BMI student composer award in New York City.

Derek studied composition with David Felder, Louis Andriessen, Cindy McTee and Steve Martland. He has attended the University of North Texas, the Royal Academy of Music in London, the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague and received his Ph.D in composition from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo where he held a four-year Presidential Fellowship. As a flutist, he has a Master degree in flute performance from SUNY Buffalo where he studied with the late Cheryl Gobbetti Hoffman.

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Sara Everson
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